

Benjamin H. Latrobe, Surveyor of the Public Buildings to Thomas Jefferson, December 15, 1802, from Thomas Jefferson and the National Capital. Edited by Saul K. Padover.

Latrobe to Jefferson EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM B. HENRY LATROBE TO THE PRESIDENT DATED

Philadelphia. December 15th. 1802.

Sir/

Capt. Dale, of the U. States Navy, called upon me this morning, and in conversation upon the Naval Arsenal or Dry-docks proposed by you to be erected at the Federal City, which he most warmly approved,—he informed me that the Swedish Government had lately conceived the idea of adopting the same means of preserving their Navy in times of peace. The Swedish Admiral Söderstrom described to him the situation of the Dock which was then in the progress of construction. It was intended to contain eight ships of 74. guns, and another was projected to contain 12, in all making provision for 20. ships of the line. The situation was remarkably favorable. Deep water close to a perpendicular rock, which can be easily wrought, gives the opportunity of excavating the Dock, the rock forms the wall, and the roof

is laid over, at such a height that the ships go in with their lower masts standing. Capt. Dale did not exactly know how the ships were worked into the dock, but from his description of the situation I presume they are tide-docks.

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Admiral Söderstrom said, that the vessels were to be washed with fresh-water, perfectly drained, and opened to a circulation of air, and that he had no doubt of their remaining in perfect repair in the dock for a century, and gave many reasons for his opinion which were convincing.

[Copied from ms. *Records of the Senate*, in the National Archives; published in AMERICAN STATE PAPERS, Vol. 23, p. 108.]